

# JEWISH THEOLOGY

BY THE

REV. S. LEVY, M.A.



*Reprinted from* THE JEWISH CHRONICLE.



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S. Schechter 1920.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

This essay originally appeared in *The Jewish Chronicle* as a review of K. Kohler's "Jewish Theology." I am indebted to that journal for permission to reprint it in its present form.

This booklet is issued for two reasons. In the first place, I venture to think that the plan of treatment presents some novel features in methods of inquiry into the whole subject. In the second place, in the absence of any small handbook of Jewish Theology, this essay may, perhaps, serve as a useful introduction to the study of the larger works of S. Schechter, "Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology," and K. Kohler, "Jewish Theology."

S. L.

LONDON, *July*, 1920.



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# JEWISH THEOLOGY.

## I.—INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. "Jewish Theology," by Dr. K. Kohler, is the first attempt published in English to present with any degree of completeness the contents of Judaism as a system of faith. The author states that he had no work before him to serve as a pattern or guide. He points out that closer acquaintance with the religious and philosophical systems of modern times has created a new demand for a Jewish theology by which the Jew can comprehend his own religious truths in the light of modern thought, and at the same time defend them against the aggressive attitude of the ruling religious sects. Dr. Kohler is of opinion that hitherto the attempts made in this direction have been but feeble and sporadic, and that if the structure is not to stand altogether in the air, the necessary material must be brought together from its many sources with painstaking labour. He writes from the view-point of historical research, instead of a mere dogmatic or doctrinal system. He claims that the Jewish religion has never been static, fixed for all time by an ecclesiastical authority, but has ever been and still is the result of a dynamic process of growth and development. At the same time he felt that he could not omit the mystical element which pervades the Jewish religion in common with all others. He maintains that as our prophets were seers and not philosophers or moralists, so divine inspiration in varying degrees constitutes a factor of Synagogal as well as Scriptural Judaism.

Revelation, therefore, is considered by Dr. Kohler as a continuous force in shaping and re-shaping the Jewish faith. He regards the religious genius of the Jew as falling within the domain of ethnic psychology, concerning which science is still groping in the dark, but which progressive Judaism is bound to recognise in its effects throughout the ages. At the same time he holds that he has endeavoured to be just and fair to Conservative Judaism, which he frankly acknowledges must ever claim the reverence we owe to our cherished past, the mother that raised and nurtured us. Dr. Kohler says that the present age of historical research imposes the necessity upon us of re-statement of the fundamental doctrines of Judaism, if Judaism is to retain its prominent position among the powers of thought, and to be clearly understood by the modern world.

## II.—THREE-FOLD DIVISION OF THE SUBJECT.

§ 2. Dr. Kohler points out that many attempts have been made to formulate the articles of faith of Judaism, but few, however, in his opinion, have succeeded in working out the entire content of the Jewish faith from a modern view-point, which must include historical, critical, and psychological research, as well as the study of comparative religion. Dr. Kohler adopts the following tripartite plan for his attempt to present the doctrines of Judaism systematically along the lines of historical development: I. God, II. Man, and III. Israel and the Kingdom of God.

Dr. Kohler does not explain how he arrives at this division of his subject. He does not state on what principles it is based. In the absence of any clear guidance, it appears at first sight to be drawn on arbitrary lines, and the thoughtful reader finds himself compelled to come to the author's rescue. The writer's first step has been presumably to take Theology in its literal sense as "theory concerning God." Therefore the first great section deals with "God." But as God cannot be said to exist unless there is man to recognise His existence, a second main division is devoted to "Man." Finally, as the work is a treatise on *Jewish* Theology in particular, and not on Theology in general, there follows a third and final portion entitled "Israel and the Kingdom of God."

§ 3. The first point we have to determine is the fitness of Dr. Kohler's plan for the exposition of his system of Jewish Theology. Does the author's division of the subject adequately help the earnest student in search

of truth to know in ready outline what are the real and outstanding problems of Jewish Theology? Does it enable him with reasonable quickness and accuracy to assign to every particular topic its right place in its proper department or sub-section, and to find there a solution propounded which, after examining its worth, he may accept or reject? It is one thing to collect, and then divide, all the material for the study of Jewish Theology. It is quite another thing to judge the method adopted for the ordered use of this amassed knowledge as the best one to meet the need of getting "a general hang of the thing." This colloquial expression, used in a reverent spirit, best conveys the real want. It may be doubted whether Dr. Kohler has been completely or uniformly successful in this direction of giving explicit interpretation of the scope of Jewish Theology, and of showing the essential thread of connection in his individual method of treatment.

Obviously, it is quite easy for anyone to make such a comment and raise such an objection, and then to shelter himself behind the veil of vagueness, and, when challenged for proof, to run away, after having cast his shaft of criticism. Therefore, in attempting to justify the opinion just hazarded that there may be a simpler and more easily intelligible way of getting "a general hang of the thing," let us approach the whole subject from a different avenue of thought. Let us for the time being forget that there is such a word or such a science as "Theology." Let us begin at the other extreme. Let Definition be the goal we hope to reach, and not the crease from which we start. Pursuing this method we may be led to a result different from that obtained by Dr. Kohler, and one which may win even less acceptance or approval. Dr. Kohler, however, claims that his work is the *first* complete systematic



presentation of Jewish Theology to appear in English. He would not stand in the front rank of scholars if he also made the smallest pretension or had the slightest ambition for it to remain the *last* word on the theme. All roads may eventually lead to the same destination, but each road may have a peculiar merit or quality of its own, deserving of respectful notice from those who reasonably demand the opportunity and the right of selection before they feel called upon to make the final choice. Nothing more, then, is claimed for the following suggested method of coming to close grips with the subject than a natural desire to be of some service in making a modest contribution to clearness of outline in visualising the whole field of Jewish Theology.

§ 4. We think, we feel, we act. Thought, Feeling, and Action sum up human consciousness. But all thoughts, all feelings, and all actions have not the same value. Once we bring in the idea of "value," we thereby introduce the notion of a "test" or "criterion" of value. The criterion of Thought is Truth, the criterion of Feeling is Beauty, and the criterion of Action is Goodness. Therefore, the world, to be regarded as the best of all possible worlds, must appeal to us as True, Beautiful, and Good. Truth as the test of the value of thought implies Unity or Self-consistency. So we may slightly amend the phrase and say that the world we know, if it is to be accepted by us as a harmonious whole, must appeal to us as One, Beautiful and Good.

If we now make the transition to Religion, we cannot fail to realise that the world, as grasped by the religious consciousness, must likewise be One, Beautiful and Good. Different religions and different shades of the same religion trace their characteristic features to their attitude towards that aspect of the scheme of the universe which the

particular religion or shade of religion in question is most anxious to emphasise or is peculiarly gifted to stress. Thus Judaism is sometimes described as preaching the Beauty of Holiness, and Hellenism as teaching the Holiness of Beauty. But this is not stating the whole truth. In Judaism the doctrines of Unity and Righteousness (the Biblical term for Goodness) are very dominant, and the theory of Beauty relatively recedes into the background. In the religion of the Greeks, the worship of Beauty is intensified to a very acute degree, but at the same time it can by no means be asserted with accuracy that the doctrine of Ethics (the Greek term for Goodness) is wholly absent. In Buddhism, the cult of Goodness is nearly so exclusively magnified that the appreciation of Unity and Beauty almost disappears. "Between the two extremes, the Hellenic self-expansion and the Buddhist self-extinction, Jewish ethics labours for self-elevation under the uplifting power of a Holy God" (Kohler, p. 479). But we should not permit such captivating antitheses and fascinating contrasts between different religions to be drawn and tightened in any extreme or rigorous measure. All we are entitled to conclude is that on the whole a particular religion is attracted by the need of solving a particular phase of the problem of a harmonious universe, and prompted by its special bent or capacity, devotes most attention to Unity, to Beauty, or to Goodness, as the case may be.

§ 5. Following this line of investigation in its application to Judaism, our task now emerges as the effort to ascertain how a system of Jewish Theology can be made to justify a valid faith in the World conceived as One, Beautiful and Good. In other words, we want to feel convinced that God's commandment is not too hard for us, neither is it far off, but that it is very nigh unto us :

(i.) in our mouth, (ii.) and in our heart, (iii.) that we may do it (Deuteronomy xxx., II, 14); thus proving responsive to the highest tests of the values of: (i.) Thought; (ii.) Feeling; and (iii.) Action. Like Dr. Kohler, we have arrived at a three-fold division of the subject, but in place of his three main sections: (a) God; (b) Man; and (c) Israel and the Kingdom of God; our three chief headings appear as (a) Unity; (b) Beauty; and (c) Goodness. It may here be observed that Dr. Kohler comes very near to our classification when, in a different connection, he says that "the Jewish conception of God thus makes *truth*, as well as *righteousness* and *love*, both a moral duty for man and a historical task comprising all humanity" (p. 23).

How does our alternative synopsis work out in actual treatment? A few illustrations in each of the proposed three divisions: (a) Unity; (b) Beauty; and (c) Goodness; may best show its value in the way it invests a great deal of our old literature with a fresh meaning, throws a new light on ancient doctrines, wise saws, and holy instances, and assists in determining their right place in a complete system of Jewish Theology.

## III.—UNITY.

§ 6. The first great principle of Jewish Theology is the recognition of the Unity of the World. The Unity of the Cosmos forms in its turn the basis of the passage in thought to the Unity of the Deity. "From Nature to Nature's God" is a frequent theme in (a) the Bible; (b) the Liturgy; and (c) the Midrash.

(a) "Know ye not? Hear ye not? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood the foundations of the earth? It is He that sitteth above the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. . . . Lift up your eyes on high, and see: who hath created these? He that bringeth out their host by number, He calleth them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one faileth" (Isaiah xl., 21, 22, 26). "Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, that the waves thereof roar, the Lord of Hosts is His name" (Jeremiah xxxi., 35). "Thus saith the Lord, If My covenant be not with day and night, if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth" (Jeremiah xxxiii., 25). "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm xix., 2). "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters. . . . The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness. . . . The Lord sat enthroned at the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth as King for ever" (Psalm xxix., 3, 8, 10). "For the Lord is a great God. . . . in whose hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountain are His also. The sea is His,

and He made it ; and His hands formed the dry land. O come let us bow down and bend the knee ; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker " (Psalm xcv., 3-6). " O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness : tremble before Him all the earth. . . . Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice ; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof ; let the field exult, and all that is therein ; then shall the trees of the wood sing for joy, before the Lord for He is come " (Psalm xcvi., 9, 11-13). " Who didst establish the earth upon its foundations, that it should not be moved for ever and ever ; Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a vesture : the waters stood above the mountains. . . . Thou didst set a bound which they should not pass over, that they might not return to cover the earth . . . . Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created ; and Thou renewest the face of the earth " (Psalm civ., 5, 6, 9, 30). " Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens ? Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth ? " (Job xxxviii., 33). " Thou art the Lord, even Thou alone ; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas and all that is in them, and Thou preservest them all ; and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee. Thou art the Lord the God " (Nehemiah ix., 6, 7).

(b) " Who in mercy givest light to the earth and to them that dwell thereon, and in Thy goodness renewest the creation every day continuously. How manifold are Thy works, O Lord ! In wisdom hast Thou made them all." " Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who at Thy word bringest on the evening twilight, with wisdom openest the gates of the heavens, and with understanding changest times and variest the seasons, and arrangeest the stars in their watches in the sky, according

to Thy will." "He is the Lord of wonders, who in His goodness reneweth the creation every day continually." "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, by whose word the heavens were created, and by the breath of whose mouth all their host. Thou didst assign them a statute and a season, that they should not change their appointed charge. They are glad and rejoice to do the will of their Master, the truthful Worker whose work is Truth" (Prayer Book, pp. 37, 96, 131, 292; cf. Kohler, pp. 157, 158).

(c) Abram's early protest against the prevalent idolatry of his time, and his perception of Monotheism became the theme of various legends. One version describes the wonderful nature of Abram's birth, Nimrod's alarm at the report of the astrologers and magicians in connection therewith, and his attempt to bribe Terah to give up the child, who, under the charge of a nurse, was hidden by his father in a cave, where he remained for some years. When Abram came forth from the cave, his mind was inquiring into the creation of the World, and he was intent upon all the luminaries of the world, to bow down to them and serve them, in order that he might know which of them was God. He saw the moon, whose light shone in the night from one end of the world to the other, and whose retinue of shining stars was so numerous. Said he: "This is God!" and he worshipped her all the night. But when at daybreak he saw the sunrise, and at its rising the moon become dark and her strength wane, he said: "The light of the moon only proceeds from the light of the sun, and the world is only sustained by the light of the sun," and so he worshipped the sun all day. At evening the sun set, and its power waned, and the moon and the stars and the constellations emerged once more. Said Abram: "Verily there is a Lord and a God over

these " (see Midrash Hagadol on Genesis, ed. Schechter, p. 189f.; Cf. G. H. Box, "The Apocalypse of Abraham," p. 92). The essence of this narrative is that starting from an inquiry into the Creation of the World, and searching for an harmonic theory of the universe, Abram grasps the principle of the Unity of the Cosmos, and the Unity of the Cosmos leads him to deduce the Unity of the Deity. "Neither is Judaism the creation of a single person, either prophet or a man with divine claims. It points back to the Patriarchs as its first source of revelation. It speaks not of the God of Moses, of Amos and Isaiah, but of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thereby declaring the Jewish genius to be the creator of its own religious ideas " (Kohler, p. 16).

The doctrine of Unity is so fundamental in any satisfactory scheme of Jewish theology that it is not surprising it should find frequent and emphatic expression. "When they said to the Golden Calf, These be thy gods, O Israel (Exodus xxxii., 4), they became the enemies of the Holy One, blessed be He " (Pesikta de Rab Kahana ; ed. Buber, p. 37a). "Whoever repudiates the service of other gods is called a Jew " (Megillah 13a ; cf. Kohler p. 87 ; and I. Abrahams, "Judaism," p. 39). "So great is the sin of idolatry, that he who abjures it is as though he accepts the whole of the Torah " (Chulin, 5a ; cf. Nedarim, 25a).

Thus there must be no toying with idolatry or polytheism, no compromise with absolute Monotheism. The gulf that separates Monotheism from Dualism is infinitely wider a parting of the ways than the gap between Dualism and Polytheism. We may here adapt a couplet by Robert Browning, to bring out this vital distinction.

The little more and how much it is ;  
The little less and how far away.

"The little more " added to pure Monotheism, and

converting Monotheism into Dualism, "and how much it is." "The little less" taken away from Dualism, and changing Dualism into Monotheism, "and how far away" it is from Dualism. Once the line of absolute Monotheism is crossed, the difference between Dualism and Polytheism is of little consequence. It is the first step of declension from Monotheism which counts. The doctrine of pure Monotheism is emphatically the premier pillar of strength in any firm and enduring structure of Jewish Theology.

§ 7. Having reached the first great principle of Jewish Theology, *viz.*, One World, One God, we are now in a position to proceed to a consideration of its corollary, *viz.*, The Unity of Mankind and the Uniqueness of Israel, the Priest People. "Judaism has evolved the idea of the unity of mankind as a corollary of its ethical monotheism" (Kohler, p. 314). Mankind owes its origin to one human pair, Adam and Eve. All the races of men form one great family, because they are all descended from a single common parentage. "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them; and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and *replenish the earth*" (Genesis i. 27, 28). "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, He is God; that formed the earth and made it, He established it, He created it not a waste, *He formed it to be inhabited*: I am the Lord, and there is none else" (Isaiah xlv., 18). "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" (Malachi ii., 10). "What is the meaning of, For this is the whole of man (Ecclesiastes xii., 13)? Rabbi Elazar said, The Holy One, blessed be He, said, The whole world would not have been created but for the sake of man" (Berachot 6b). "Rabbi Akiba said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour



as thyself' (Leviticus xix., 18) is a great principle in the Torah. Ben Azai said, 'This is the book of the generations of man' (Genesis v., 1) is even a greater principle" (Jerushalmi Nedarim ix., 4; cf. Dr. Israel Abrahams, "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels," p. 20).

The covenant made by God with Noah after the Flood is concluded with "all flesh that is upon the earth" (Genesis ix., 17). "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth . . . . And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations . . . . which I have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth" (Genesis ix., 1, 12, 17).

The dispersal of the races of men after the building of the Tower of Babel is transformed into a blessing for the achievement of a Divine purpose. "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech . . . . So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis xi., 1, 8). "For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent" (Zephaniah iii., 9).

"And Abraham said, I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth (Genesis xxiv., 2, 3). Rabbi Phineas said, [And Abraham said], Before I made God known to His creatures, He was only 'the God of heaven.' Since I made Him known to His creatures He is now also 'the God of the earth.'" (Genesis Rabbah, lix. § 8). All mankind have their place in the Divine scheme. "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that the Lord of hosts hath blessed him, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the

work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance " (Isaiah xix, 24, 25). " Rabbi Jochanan said, What is the meaning of the verse, The Lord giveth the word, the women that proclaim the tidings are a great host (Psalm lxxviii., 12) ? This is to imply that every single word which issued from the mouth of the Almighty was uttered in seventy languages [for the seventy nations of the earth] " (Sabbath, 88b). " Resh Lakish said, What is the meaning of the passage, And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day (Genesis i, 31) ? . . . This is to imply that the Holy One, blessed be He, made a condition with Creation, and said unto it, If Israel will accept the Torah, ye shall endure ; but if not, I shall restore you to waste and voidness " (Sabbath, 88a). " The Torah was given in the wilderness, in fire and in water. Just as the wilderness, fire and water are the common property of mankind, so the Torah is the common property of mankind " (Mechilta to Exodus xx., 2 ; ed. Friedmann, 67a). The idea of Universalism is again indicated in the formula of blessings, " Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe." " Rabbi Jochanan said, Every benediction which does not include the term ' King of the Universe,' is not a benediction " (Berachot, 40b). " Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One (Deuteronomy vi., 4). Why is it said, ' the Lord our God,' seeing that it is said, ' the Lord is One ' ? ' The Lord our God ' means that His name is specially intertwined with Israel. ' The Lord is One ' implies that He is One for all mankind. The Lord is our God—in this world ; the Lord is One—in the world to come. So it is said, And the Lord shall be King over all the earth ; in that day shall the Lord be One, and His name One " (Zechariah xiv., 9) [Sifré to Deut. vi., 4 ; ed. Friedmann, 73a].

“ Rabbi Abin said in the name of Rav Ada in the name of Rabbi Isaac, Whence do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, lays Tefillin? Since it is said, The Lord hath sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength (Isaiah lxii., 8). ‘His right hand’ means the Torah, as it is said, At His right hand was a fiery law unto them (Deut. xxxiii., 2). ‘His strength’ means the Tefillin, as it is said, The Lord will give strength unto His people (Psalm xxix. 11). Whence do we know that the Tefillin are a strength unto Israel? As it is said, And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of the Lord is called upon thee; and they shall be afraid of thee (Deut. xxviii., 10). Rabbi Eliezer the Great says, This verse refers to the Tefillin of the head. Rav Nachman bar Isaac said to Rav Chiya bar Abin, What is written in the Tefillin of the Master of the Universe? The reply was, And who is like Thy people Israel, a nation one in the earth? (I. Chron. xvii., 21). And does the Holy One, blessed be He, pride himself on the praise given to Israel? Yea, for it is written, Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God (Deut. xxvi., 17). And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His own treasure (*ibid.* v., 18). The Holy One, blessed be He, said unto Israel, Ye have made Me the only object of your love in the world. I will therefore make you the only object of My love in the world. Ye have made Me the only object of your love in the world, as it is written, Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one (Deut. vi., 4). I will therefore make you the only object of My love in the world, as it is said, And who is like Thy people Israel, a nation one in the earth? ” (I. Chron. xvii., 21) [Berachot, 6a].

“ And they encamped in the wilderness (Exodus xix., 2). The Torah was given to a multitude, in public, and in

a free place. For if the Torah had been given in the land of Israel, Israel could have said to the peoples of the world, Ye have no portion in the Torah. Therefore, the Torah was given to a multitude, in public, and in a free place, so that he who wishes to accept the Torah may come and receive it" (Mechilta ad. loc.; ed. Friedmann, 62a).

The cumulative effect of all these passages selected from the Bible, Talmud and Midrash, shows a harmonic relation triumphing over the seeming contradiction between the Universalism implied in the theory of the Unity of Mankind and the Uniqueness of Israel involved in Israel's priesthood to humanity. "Israel had to be particularistic in order to formulate and hold up the universal ideal" (M. Lazarus, "The Ethics of Judaism," § 159. English translation, I., 217). "Judaism is nothing less than a message concerning the *One and Holy God* and *one, undivided humanity*, with a world-uniting *Messianic goal*, a message intrusted by Divine revelation to the Jewish people. Thus Israel is its prophetic harbinger and priestly guardian, its witness and defender throughout the ages, who is never to falter in the task of upholding and unfolding its truths until they have become the possession of the whole human race" (Kohler, p. 8).

By giving a new turn and a fresh shade of interpretation to Exodus xix., 5-6, we can deduce from and sum up in this message to Israel before the Revelation at Sinai all the four phases of the embracing doctrine of Unity, the subject which has been engaging our close attention in the whole of this section of our essay. "Now, therefore, if ye will harken unto My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine; and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy

nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the Children of Israel " (Exodus xix., 5, 6). (a) " All the earth " (v. 5) implies the Unity of the Cosmos. (b) " *My* voice," " *My* covenant," " Is *Mine* " (v. 5), " Ye shall be unto *Me* " (v. 6), convey the principle of the Unity of the Deity. (c) " Among *all* peoples " (v. 5), brings out the Unity of Humanity. (d) " A peculiar treasure " (v. 5), " a kingdom of priests and a holy nation " (v. 6), outline the Uniqueness of Israel's Priesthood to Mankind.

With this final illustration we may close the first of our three main divisions of the concepts of Jewish Theology, which has been devoted to the general principle of Unity, commanding and impressive in its four-fold symmetry : (i.) the Unity of the Cosmos ; (ii.) the Unity of the Deity ; (iii.) the Unity of Humanity ; and (iv.) the Uniqueness of Israel's Priesthood in the world-wide family of the races of men.

## IV.—BEAUTY.

§ 8. In Judaism, the cult of Beauty was considerably limited by the prohibition against idolatry. "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down unto them nor serve them" (Exodus xx., 4). Nevertheless it cannot be admitted without challenge that the attitude of Judaism towards Art has been almost entirely negative. Aptitude for construction is regarded as a divine gift, and Bezalel is described as having been "filled with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (Exodus xxxv., 31). "Them hath He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of workmanship, of the craftsman, and of the skilful workman and of the weaver in colours" (*ibid.* v. 35).

The vocabulary of the Hebrew language is rich in different terms to indicate various nuances in the interpretation of standards and types of beauty, whether it be in application to form or appearance, physical attractiveness, personal charm or spiritual grace. "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight" (Genesis ii., 9). Reference is frequently made in the Bible to the beauty of various individuals, *e.g.*, Sarah (Genesis xii., 11), Rebekah (*ibid.* xxiv., 16), Rachel (*ibid.* xxix., 17), Joseph (*ibid.* xxxix., 6), Saul (1 Samuel ix., 2), David (*ibid.* xvi., 12), Absalom (2 Samuel xiv., 25, 26), and Esther (Esther ii., 7, 17). In Ezekiel xxiii., 6, Oholah is rebuked for yielding to "handsome young men." The city of God is "fair in situation, the joy of the whole earth" (Psalm xlviii., 3).

"Mark ye well her ramparts, traverse her palaces ; that ye may tell it to a later generation " (*ibid.* v., 14).

The beauty of the Greek language is admired (Megillah, 9b). The artistic temperament is betrayed in the metaphors and similes of the Bible, *e.g.*, in the praise of the virtuous woman (Proverbs xxxi., 10-31), in the love idyll of the Song of Songs, and in many other poetical portions of the Bible. See C. G. Montefiore, "A Tentative Catalogue of Biblical Metaphors," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, iii., 623-681. On the attitude of Judaism towards Beauty, see the article on "Art and Judaism," by S. J. Solomon, in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, xiii., 553-566.

"The Holy One, blessed be He, consulted the Torah as one would look to an artist for a design before He carried His plan of Creation into execution " (Tanchuma to Genesis, i., 1 ; ed. Buber, p. 4). "Rav Jehuda said in the name of Rab, Bezalel knew how to arrange the letters of the alphabet with which heaven and earth were created, for it is written in one passage, And He hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge (Exodus xxxv., 31), and it is written in another passage, The Lord by wisdom founded the earth ; by understanding He established the heavens " (Proverbs iii., 19) [Berachot, 55a]. Everything connected with the Temple was marked by the attribute of "Yedid," *i.e.*, "lovely " or "beloved." Solomon, who was named Jedidiah, "Beloved of the Lord " (2 Samuel xii., 25), built the Temple, referred to as "lovely " (Psalm lxxxiv., 2), and situated in the lot of Benjamin, "the beloved of the Lord " (Deut. xxxiii., 12), in honour of God, who is "well-beloved " (Isaiah v., 1), in order that the sins of Israel, "the dearly beloved of My soul " (Jeremiah xii., 7), might be forgiven " (Menachot, 53a, 53b).

On the one hand, in making an appeal to the æsthetic

sense, Jewish thought adds to an appreciation of beauty the impress of a religious or moral duty. "This is my God, and I will glorify him (Exodus xv., 2). Rabbi Ishmael said, Is it then possible for man to glorify his Maker? But the passage teaches, I will beautify myself in the performance of precepts. I will have a beautiful Lulab, a beautiful Succah, beautiful Tsitsis, and beautiful Tefillin" (Mehilta ad loc.; ed., Friedmann, 37a). "Hillel taught, As in a theatre and circus the statues of the king must be kept clean by him to whom they have been entrusted, so the purity of the body is a duty of man, who has been created in the image of the Almighty King of the Universe" (Leviticus Rabbah, xxxiv., § 3). It is interesting to note that according to the concrete meaning of the root, the abstract injunction, "Correct thyself first, then correct others" (Sanhedrin 18a) should be rendered, "First beautify thyself, then beautify others."

On the other hand, the Jewish attitude towards art was guarded because of the desire to prevent Religion developing into a mere emotion at the expense of the acknowledgment of Unity and the practice of Goodness. "Why was David punished [in the death of Uzzah, who took hold of the ark of God, when the oxen stumbled, 2 Samuel, vi., 6, 7]? Because he called the words of the Torah 'songs,' as it is said, Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage (Psalm cxix, 54). . . . It is written, But unto the sons of Kohath he gave no wagons, because the service of the holy things belonged unto them; they bore them upon their shoulders (Numbers vii., 9). But David placed the ark of God upon a wagon" (2 Samuel vi., 3). Therefore he was punished in the death of Uzzah (Sota, 35a).

"One should never allow an impure word to issue from his lips, for the Torah employed a circumlocution in



order to refrain from using an impure word, as it is said, Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean " (Genesis vii., 8) [Pesachim, 3a). On the beauty of good conduct and the avoidance of evil deeds, see also Sabbath 33a, and Yoma 86a.

Thus, while Beauty may be the criterion of value in the sphere of Feeling or Emotion, in Judaism appreciation of concrete or physical beauty received far less insistence than the cult of abstract or moral beauty. Art was to be the handmaid of Religion, not its mistress. The Holiness of Beauty was not to be the test of Feeling at the expense of the Beauty of Holiness. Religious duty and moral behaviour were to be beautified, it is true, but they had to be hallowed by the touch of Righteousness. It is in this way that we are led to make the transition to the third and final division of Jewish Theology, viz. : Goodness as the criterion of the value of Action.

## V.—GOODNESS.

§ 9. (a) We have already seen, § 6 (c), that Abraham was the first to seize the doctrine of Unity as a fundamental principle in a scheme of Hebrew Theology. But it is of the greatest significance to note that the reason assigned for the choice of Abraham to be the founder of his people was his love and practice of Righteousness. "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him" (Genesis xviii., 19). Each nation has its particular gift, and Israel had a special aptitude for morality which enabled him joyfully to accept the privilege and the responsibility of regarding Goodness, Righteousness, or Holiness, as the basis of life. "The Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to the sons of Esau, the wicked, and said unto them, Will ye receive my Law? They said unto Him, What is written in it? He said unto them, Thou shalt not kill. They said unto Him, But killing is the heritage our father bequeathed unto us, as it is said, And by thy sword shalt thou live (Genesis xxvii., 40). God then revealed Himself to the sons of Ammon and Moab, and said unto them, Will ye receive My Law? They said unto Him, What is written in it? God answered them, Thou shalt not commit adultery. They said, We are the descendants of incest, how can we accept it? God then revealed Himself to the sons of Ishmael, and said unto them, Will ye receive My Law? They said unto Him, What is written in it? He said unto them, Thou shalt not steal. They said unto Him, But this is the blessing with which our father was blessed, as it is written, His hand shall be

against every man (Genesis xvi., 12). But when God came to Israel, At His right hand was a fiery law unto them (Deut. xxxiii., 2), they all opened their mouths and said, All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and obey" (Exodus xxiv., 7) [Mechilta to Exodus xx., 2; ed. Friedmann, p. 67a]. The point of the legend is that Esau, Ammon, Moab, and Ishmael are not represented as having refused to give intellectual assent to the doctrine of Unity, or having declined to refrain from idolatry as an outward expression of the principle of Beauty. It is the *moral* portions, not the religious portions of the Decalogue, which they reject. It is precisely this duty of righteousness in conduct, practical morality, or Goodness, which Israel is the first people to accept without hesitation or question (Exodus xix., 8; xxiv., 3, 7). "Whoever possesses no sense of shame and chastity, of him it is certain that his ancestors did not stand at Sinai" (Nedarim 20a; Kohler, p. 347).

(b) In Jewish Theology, Goodness is regarded as the expression of the Divine Will. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi., 8). "For the Lord is righteous, He loveth righteousness; the upright shall behold His face" (Psalm xi., 7).

(c) The incentive to human righteousness is imitation of the Divine Ideal, "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am holy" (Leviticus xi., 44). "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (*ibid.* xix., 2). "To love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave unto Him" (Deut. xi., 22).

"Abba Saul said, Be like unto God. As He is gracious and merciful, so be thou gracious and merciful" (Sabbath, 133b).

"After the Lord your God shall ye walk (Deut. xiii., 5). Is it then possible for man to walk after the Divine Presence? Has it not already been said, For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire (Deut. iv., 24)? But the meaning is, Imitate the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He. Just as He clothes the naked (Genesis iii., 21), so do thou clothe the naked; just as He visits the sick (*ibid.* xviii., 1), so do thou tend the sick; just as He comforts the mourner (*ibid.* xxv., 2), so do thou comfort the mourner; just as He buries the dead (Deut. xxxiv., 6), so do thou bury the dead" (Sota 14a).

(d) Conduct is the dominant criterion of the validity of religion.

"And ye shall not profane My holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the Lord who hallow you" (Leviticus xxii., 32).

"Justice, justice shalt thou follow" (Deut. xvi., 20). "Thou shalt be whole-hearted with the Lord thy God" (*ibid.* xviii., 13).

"Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and I am God" (Isaiah xliii., 12). "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord" (*ibid.* lii., 11). "Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart" (Psalm xv., 1-2) [cf. Psalm xxiv., 3-4].

"Ye are the children of the Lord your God (Deut. xiv., 1). Ye are only the children of the Lord your God when ye show the obedience of children" (Kiddushin 36a). "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and I am God (Isaiah xliii., 12). Rabbi Simeon ben Johai said, If ye are My witnesses, then I am the Lord; but if ye are not My witnesses, I cease to be, if that were possible, the Lord" (Pesikta de Rab Kahana, ed. Buber 102b).

(e) The appeal for human righteousness rests on the assumption of the moral government of the Universe.

God's in His Heaven,  
All's right with the world.

“ That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked ; that be far from Thee ; shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly ? ” (Genesis xviii., 25). “ The rock, His work is perfect ; for all His ways are justice ; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He ” (Deut. xxxii., 4). “ Thy righteousness is like the mighty mountains ; Thy judgments are like the great deep ” (Psalm xxxvi., 7). “ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne ” (Psalm lxxxix., 15).

“ And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good (Genesis i., 31). Abbahu said, From this verse we learn that the Holy One, blessed be He, created world after world, and destroyed them, until He created this world. He said, The other worlds pleased me not ; this world pleases me ” (Genesis Rabbah ix., § 2). From the same verse, “ Behold, it was very good,” Rabbi Meir inferred, “ Death, too, is good ” (Genesis Rabbah ix., § 5). “ A God of faithfulness (Deut. xxxii., 4). God had faith in the world, therefore He created it ” (Sifre, § 307 ; ed. Friedmann 132b). “ Whatsoever the All-Merciful doeth, he doeth for good ” (Berachot, 60b).

## VI.—LIMITATIONS OF THEOLOGY.

§ 10. We have now completed our synthesis of the fundamental concepts of Judaism, based on the three-fold division of Unity, Beauty, and Goodness. We have seen that the Universe, as understood and interpreted by the religious consciousness, must disclose itself completely as One, Beautiful, and Good. We must not, however, ignore or disguise from ourselves the important fact that Jewish Theology, like all systems of theology, is bound by certain limitations. The crucial problem which Judaism, like all religions, has to face, is the existence of Evil. What is the purpose of Evil? Why did God create suffering? Why does God permit pain? What place can we find for Evil in a world which from the religious aspect must reveal itself as wholly One, Beautiful, and Good?

A simple solution would be the acceptance of Dualism, the recognition of a Creative Principle of Good and a Destructive Principle of Evil. But such a doctrine would destroy the symmetry of any scheme of theology, and would be a crushing challenge to, and an emphatic repudiation of, the theories of pure Unity and absolute Goodness, without which the whole superstructure of Jewish Theology, in particular, inevitably collapses. We must, therefore, find some other way of acknowledging the existence of Evil without limiting the Unity of the Deity and the Moral Government of the Universe. In Isaiah xlv., 5-7, the Dualism of the religious system of Zoroaster is definitely rejected. "I am the Lord, and there is none else; beside Me there is no God. I have girded thee, though thou hast not known Me, that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside Me; I am the Lord,

and there is none else ; I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace, and create evil ; I am the Lord that doeth all these things."

Man has the choice between Good and Evil. The responsibility for Evil is thus transferred to man, and Evil becomes either a punishment for sin or a discipline as a means for the realisation of Good. "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse ; the blessing if ye shall hearken unto the commandments of the Lord your God . . . and the curse, if ye shall not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord your God " (Deuteronomy xi., 26-28). "I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse ; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live " (ibid xxx., 19). "For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by His actions are weighed " (I. Samuel, ii., 3b). "For by fire will the Lord plead, and by His sword, with all flesh " (Isaiah lxvi., 16). "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee ; know therefore and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that My fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts " (Jeremiah ii., 19). "Great in counsel, and mighty in work ; whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings " (Jeremiah xxxii., 19). "Evil shall slay the wicked " (Psalm xxxiv., 22). "He that soweth righteousness hath a sure reward " (Proverbs xi., 182). "Evil pursueth sinners, but to the righteous good shall be repaid " (Proverbs xiii., 21). "He delivereth the afflicted by His affliction, and openeth their ear by tribulation " (Job xxxvi., 15).

"When a man sees that chastisements are come upon him, let him examine his deeds, as it is said, Let us search and try our ways, and return to the Lord (Lamenta-

tions iii, 40). . . . For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth (Proverbs iii., 12), These are the chastisements of love" (Berachot 5a). "For two and a half years the School of Shammai disputed with the School of Hillel. The former said: It were better that man had not been created than created. The latter said: It is better that man has been created than not created. They voted and decided, It were better that man had not been created than created. Since, however, he has been created, let him search his deeds" (Erubin, 13b). "Let a man rejoice in suffering more than in the enjoyment of good. For if he enjoy only good all his days, then his sins are not forgiven. How is he pardoned? He is pardoned through chastisements . . . Suffering is precious in the sight of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord rests upon him who is visited with trials, as it is said, As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee (Deut. viii., 5). . . . Sufferings atone more than sacrifices" (Sifre, § 32; ed. Friedmann, p. 73b). "Evil and good come not out of the mouth of the Most High (Lamentations iii., 38), but they are self-determined. Evil cometh upon evil-doers, and good cometh upon them that do good" (Deut. Rabbah iv., § 3. See also my book, "Original Virtue," pp. 48-55). Both Good and Evil are placed in the hand of men, but the Good can turn the Evil into Good (Genesis Rabbah ix., § 11).

"They asked Wisdom, What is the punishment of the sinner? Wisdom replied, Evil pursueth sinners (Proverbs xiii., 21). They asked Prophecy, What is the punishment of the sinner? Prophecy replied, The soul that sinneth it shall die (Ezekiel xviii., 20). They asked the Torah, What is the punishment of the sinner? The Torah replied, Let him bring a trespass offering, and he will obtain atonement. They asked the Holy One,



blessed be He, What is the punishment of the sinner? The Holy One, blessed be He, replied, Let him do repentance, and he will obtain atonement. That is the meaning of what is written, Good and upright is the Lord; therefore doth He instruct sinners in the way (Psalm xxv., 9). He instructs sinners in the way they should do repentance" (Yalkut to Psalm xxv., 9).

"In the moral striving of man we can but realise that our every victory contributes toward the majestic work of God" (Kohler, pp. 179, 195, 196). This view may be true in part that much goodness in life is achieved after conflict with evil. But what religion has to prove is that Righteousness can *only* be achieved by the conquest over or negation of Evil. For instance, war may be a cause for the display of the spirit of courage and endurance and self-sacrifice. But these virtues can be and are also evoked without the incentive of fratricidal strife. The struggle with evil may produce goodness, but it has not been proved that Good cannot exist without the existence of Evil.

There is, therefore, a residual strain of harshness, if not injustice, in all theories which attempt to explain the existence of Evil. All that they succeed in doing is to mitigate somewhat the severity of the problem. They all equally fail to offer a complete and effective solution of the mystery. The need thus arises and expresses itself for a belief in some Being, transcending finite knowledge and human experience, to save the consistency and harmony of our acceptance of the World as One, Beautiful, and Good.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. xxix., 28). "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah lv., 8). "Rabbi Jannai said, It is not in our power to

explain either the prosperity of the wicked or the afflictions of the righteous" (Ethics of the Fathers iv., 19). "The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice (Dent. xxxii., 4). If another man than Moses had uttered these words the world would have laughed at him and said, Whence does this man know the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He? But since it is written, He made known His ways unto Moses (Psalm ciii., 7), therefore it is said, The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice" (Tanchuma to Exodus xviii., 1.; ed. Buber, p. 72). "Rav Joseph, the son of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, fell ill and swooned. When he came to, his father said to him, What hast thou seen? The son replied, I saw the world reversed; those who are here on high were there below, and those who are here below were there on high. The father said to him, My son, thou hast seen the clear (rightly-conducted) world . . . . And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall the Lord be One and His name one (Zechariah xiv., 9). Is He then not One to-day? Rabbi Achah bar Chanina said, The world to come is not like this world. In this world on hearing good tidings a man says, Blessed art Thou who art good, and dispensest good; and on hearing sad tidings he says, Blessed art Thou, the true Judge. But in the world to come he will always have occasion only to say, Blessed art Thou, who art good and dispensest good" (Pesachim 50a). On earth are the broken arcs, but in heaven is the perfect round.

"Six hundred and thirteen precepts were given to Moses. . . . David came and compressed them into eleven, as it is written, Lord who shall abide in Thy Tabernacle? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart, etc. (Psalm xv.). . . . Isaiah came and compressed them into

six (Isaiah xxxiii., 6). Micah came and compressed them into three (Micah vi., 8). . . . Isaiah came again and compressed them into two, as it is said, Keep ye justice, and do righteousness (Isaiah lvi., 1). . . . Habakkuk came and compressed them into one, as it is said, The righteous shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk ii., 4) [Makkoth 23b, 24a ; cf. Dr. Israel Abrahams, "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels," p. 23]. It is remarkable that, with the exception of the last, all these compendia of the six hundred and thirteen precepts resolve themselves into rules of morality. The single maxim of Habakkuk supplies the clue to the whole practice of Righteousness. The final incentive to Holiness, the ultimate sanction for Goodness, is Faith. "The righteous shall live by his faith." It is further significant that Habakkuk was definitely grappling with the problem of Evil. The prophet clearly recognised the moral difficulty involved, and was baffled by it. Therefore, the individual and characteristic message of his career was his conclusion, "The righteous shall live by his faith." Where Reason fails, Faith must come to the rescue. Theology as a science must ever remain incomplete, unless and until it is touched by a living and an abiding Faith in God.

## VII.—CONCLUSION.

§ 11. Although the method pursued in our essay has differed from Dr. Kohler's plan of treatment, we can, nevertheless, accord very high praise to Dr. Kohler's work. Dr. Kohler has a long record of careful investigation and wide and scientific scholarship. In his "Jewish Theology" he has gathered together many scattered contributions from his pen, added to them from his ever fresh stores of knowledge, and unified them with a mental vigour which calls for respect and admiration. The merit of the book lies not only in the nature of the material presented, but also in the skill with which this material has been treated. Every chapter is interesting, instructive and full of suggestive thought, providing a valuable help to clear reflection. There are also many happy touches and illuminating notes compressing considered verdicts, *e.g.*, "The philosophy of Bergson, which eliminates design and purpose from the cosmos and places Deity itself into the process as the vital urgent of it all, and thus sees God for ever in the making, is pantheistic and un-Jewish, and therefore cannot be considered in a theology of Judaism. This does not exclude our accepting minor elements of his system, which contains suggestive hints. H. G. Wells' 'God the Invisible King,' is likewise a God in the making, *man-made*, not the Maker and Ruler of man" (Kohler, p. 71).

It is only right that we should now recall the fine beginning made in the modern study of Jewish Theology by Schechter. Schechter, however, mainly confined his contribution to "Some Aspects of *Rabbinic* Theology." Dr. Kohler has attempted to cover the whole field. In a treatise extending to nearly five hundred pages, the author has the right to exercise his own judgment as to the space

allotted to each topic. But in our opinion there are some important concepts of Judaism to which Dr. Kohler has not given quite adequate treatment. *Imitatio Dei*, the Human Love of the Divine, *Kiddush Hashem* ("Sanctification of the Name of God"), Free Will, and Original Virtue, are some of the subjects which might have received fuller attention. Dr. Kohler devotes only two pages (pp. 406, 407) to Original Virtue, as compared with a whole chapter in Schechter's work (pp. 170-198). On p. 407 there is an error (repeated from the earlier German work on Jewish Theology by Dr. Kohler, on which the present English version is largely based) in the reference to the article on "The Doctrine of Original Virtue." The authorship of the essay in question should have been credited to me.

Dr. Kohler is clear in the enunciation of his own views, and fair in presenting opinions from which he differs. With laudable impartiality he also gives the data from which the reader can form his own independent judgment. Further, he shows the contact of Judaism with non-Jewish modes of thought and systems of faith. Dr. Kohler has produced a book which, in many ways, is a sincere and successful attempt to combine in a single treatise a systematic and historical presentation of the origin, development, and present interpretation of the leading doctrines of Judaism. He has something to teach which we wish to learn, and we cordially welcome this vigorous work of a distinguished veteran in the realm of Jewish thought and scholarship.